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**ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT ON  
MAINSTREAM POLITICS DURING MUSHARRAF REGIME (1999-2008)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper explores the impact of women empowerment under Musharraf regime. It is argued in the paper that women representation in the parliament was increased in order to improve the image of military regime at international level. Thus political empowerment of women was used as an instrument of projecting liberal orientation of the Musharraf regime. Secondly this paper also describes the socio-religious circumstances for the application of Musharraf's political reforms. Under these circumstances Musharraf regime promoted women's participation in order to reduce the rising influence of fundamentalism. Thirdly this paper attempts to evaluate the impact of women participation on the mainstream politics in Pakistan. This article further argues that the reservation of seats for women at national and local levels significantly improved their position in politics.*

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**Keywords:** Political Participation, Women Representation, Political Sphere, Military Regime

**INTRODUCTION**

Historically two reasons are cited for the women's minimal participation in politics. Firstly, women are not capable to handle political, administrative and governmental matters rationally. They are emotional, short-sighted with no reasoning, weak-minded and are inferior to men. Secondly, women are supposed to look after their children, husband and family. They are responsible for the comfort of their families and rearing of their children.

There is another school of thought comprising scholars, philosophers and leaders arguing about the political rights and participation of women in politics. In their opinion, modern women can contribute more in social and economic development of society yet their representation at decision making institutions is insignificant.

Thus, in the course of 70 years, progressive Muslim groups in Pakistan have justified women's education, freedom and rights within Islamic framework in contrast to the orthodox section using religion to prevent women from their political rights. Women in Pakistan had to go a long way as far as their role and status in politics is concerned. On the onset of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Chief Executive of Pakistan, General (Retd.) Pervez Musharraf assigned added importance to the political participation of women in Pakistan.

Musharraf's first aim, as he mentions in his autobiography, was political empowerment of women. "Empowering them politically gives them a way to shape their own future. Through empowerment, they gain opportunity to fight for women's causes themselves in the highest governmental bodies" (Musharraf 2006:309).

On the whole, Pervez Musharraf apparently set in motion an "irreversible process" toward the emancipation of women. Musharraf called it an irreversible because he saw it to be gradually gaining momentum (Ibid).

This study is aimed at exploring the political forces inducing Pervez Musharraf embarking on the road to political emancipation of women in Pakistan and its subsequent impact on the politics of Pakistan.

#### **POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

The Constitution of Pakistan 1956 reserved ten seats for women in the federal legislature – five to be elected by constituencies in East Pakistan and five by West Pakistan. It was also provided under article 44 (2) that the constituencies shall accordingly be delimited as women's territorial constituencies for this purpose. Similarly, ten seats were reserved in each provincial assembly. The Constitution of the Second Republic (1962) stipulated six seats for women in the National Assembly - three to be elected by each province. Besides, five seats of members of the each provincial Assembly were reserved exclusively for women. The Constitution of the Second Republic (1962) stipulated six seats for women in the National Assembly - three to be elected by each province. Besides, five seats of members of the each provincial Assembly were reserved exclusively for women.

Still there have been recurrent trials for the increased presence of women in legislative bodies. Among the different trials, one method

was the women to have double vote – one vote for general seat candidate and another for the women’s seat. Alternatively, single voter casting multiple ballots for different categories of candidates, including women and minorities was also tried out in local government elections of 2005. However, the issue required deft political and constitutional handling and General (retd.) Pervez Musharraf as the Chief Executive of Pakistan attempted to correct the past wrongs.

Pervaiz Musharraf envisaged that emancipation and empowerment of women was vital to make Pakistan a truly democratic, progressive and economically viable state it was because of this strong commitment that during his tenure achievements in women development far exceeded than at any other time in the history of Pakistan. Despite progress in key areas Pakistani women, comprising 48% of the population, continue to suffer from a relative lack of basic minimum needs, skills, options, empowerment, justice and equality it is therefore important to analyze political empowerment of women “vital to make Pakistan a truly democratic, progressive and economically viable” during Musharraf regime.

Since Independence	Total Seats	Women Elected on Direct	Women Elected on Reserved	%
1947	30	2	-	6.7
1955	580	-	-	0
1962	156	6	-	3.8
1966	156	6	-	3.8
1972	144	6	-	4.2
1977	210	1	10	5.2
1985	217	1	21	10.1
1988	217	4	20	11.1
1990	217	2	-	0.9
1993	217	4	-	1.8
1997	217	6	-	2.8
2002	342	13	61	21.64
2008	342	17	60	22.22

**Source:** Flexherberg (2011-12). ‘Reflecting Women and Politics in Pakistan’, p.61.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate international values for political participation of women with regard to recognition of military regime.

2. To explore the impact of participation of women in political sphere on their performance in mainstream politics in Pakistan
3. To explore the impact of participation of women in political sphere on their performance in mainstream politics in Pakistan

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Alavi (1988)**, looks briefly at the changing place of women in Pakistan society which forms the background to the women's movement in the country. It was the decision of the Zia regime to embark upon a whole series of measures designed to undermine what little already existed by way of women's legal rights in the-name of Islamization that galvanized the women of Pakistan into militant action in defence of their rights and, indeed, for a just extension of these rights.

**Hakim and Aziz (2009)** gives an overview of socio-cultural, religious and political background of Pakistani society and examines the current status of women utilising data from Pakistan Fertility and Family planning Survey 2006-2007. The low status of women is one of the many factors in Pakistani society, which interfere with the achievement of development goals. The success of family planning intervention also mainly depends upon the cooperation and involvement of women. The traditional social structures and norms that limit women's roles.

**Jamal (2005)** attempts a deconstructive reading of texts by leading Pakistani feminist scholars as they attempt the difficult process of steering between fundamentalism and orientalism in their accounts of 'fundamentalist' women in the political ideological space of Pakistan. In Pakistan, as in many other societies, politico-religious movements or so-called Islamist fundamentalist movements are becoming an important site for women's activism as well as the harnessing of such activism to promote agendas that seem to undermine women's autonomy. This has become a concern for a growing feminist literature which from a variety of political and theoretical positions seeks to understand and explain the subject-position of Muslim women as politico-religious activists.

**Marsden (2013)** explores the responses of women living in a small town in the Chitral region of northern Pakistan to the Islamizing policies of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, a coalition of Islamist parties elected to provincial government in the North West Frontier Province in October 2002. Its focus is on the inherently unfinished nature of Chitralis' responses to ongoing Islamizing processes, a growing and

pervasive sense of disenchantment amongst many of the region's Muslims with the authenticity of public expressions of personal piety, and, in this context, the continuing emergence of new ways of being Muslim, modes of self-presentation and categories of Islamic public opinion forming figures.

**Ali, et.al.(2008):** This study stipulates that the participation of women citizens can determine the support and incentive structures for women councilors in performing their elected duties. In this case study the relationship between decentralization, quota system, and women's political capacity is revisited. It is proposed that the reservation of seats for women in Pakistan's local bodies is an effective means of increasing their representation as well as their political participation in the country's local governance. Secondly, it argues that there is no direct causal relationship between local government formation and seat reservation on one hand, and women's political empowerment on other; one does not inevitably translate in to the other. The reserving of 33% seat for women and its effects on improving service delivery has been a popular area for research in the recent past.

**Musharraf (2006),** relates the emancipation of women mattered for him even before he took office. According to him, as an army officer, his first aim has been the political empowerment of women. In his opinion, empowering women politically gives them a way to shape their own future. Through empowerment they gain opportunity to fight for women's causes themselves in the highest governmental bodies. In this autobiography, Pervez Musharraf (2006) has discussed what he had done to empower women politically at all level of government local provincial and national.

**Belokrenitsky Moskalenko (2007):** The primary contention of this initiative was to introduce and inculcate ideas of empowering women through the direct political and representational participation in this drive. This initiative was generally rejected as an exercise in futility by the political parties. The enormity of the task at hand and range the problems, allowed Aurat Foundation to bring together a number of concerned civil organizations in order to train both women candidates and general candidates. Studies steps taken by Pervez Musharraf to make his rule look better than similar regimes in past. For example, in the period of preparation the parliamentary elections, the electoral system was changed. To catch up with the growth of country's population, the numerical strength of the legislative bodies

was increased. The number of the member of National Assembly increased up to 342. Of this number 272 deputies were to be elected by the direct voting in single constituencies, 10 seats for religious minorities. 60 seats were reserved for women. The enlighten moderation doctrine was direct against the perversion of 'true' i.e. against its radicalistic interpretation.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study is planned as a qualitative method and based on available literature review on the research problem. Keeping in view the nature of research objectives, the efforts are made to collect material from diversified sources. Thus, there is a combination of primary and secondary sources. The primary research method for this study is literature review and conceptual modeling.

In the second stage of this study, a qualitative appraisal shall be utilized for this research leveraging interviews and observations of major stakeholders to collect substantive and relevant data. The analysis will be carried through software NVIVO which will enable us to identify the needs and solutions emerging from the interviews.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Objective No.1**

To investigate international values for political participation of women with regard to recognition of military regime.

H-No1: Women representation in the parliament was enlarged to secure international recognition by projecting liberal orientation of the Musharraf regime.

### **Analysis-1**

It can be argued that the military take over due to the circumstances which include the following. Sharp decline in economic conditions and extreme political instability. This time, however, the main reason for the military coup d'état was the confrontation between the civil and military leadership and personal rivalry between Nawaz Shareef and Pervez Musharraf.

The military rule of General Pervez Musharraf is considered different from the previous military governments in the sense that it promoted true democracy in Pakistan. General Musharraf said repeatedly that the country needed 'complete democracy', "purified

from any limitations and stratifications, the one which has deep roots in the society". In April 2000, Pervez Musharraf declared the 'all-nation campaign' for observing human rights in Pakistan.

Martial law under Musharraf was not imposed in the way it had always been enforced before; instead, a state of emergency was declared. According, Pervez Musharraf, he became the chief martial law administrator and the provinces were spared military administrators. Civilian government officials carried on doing all current work, but they executed it under the guidance and observations of military officers of the appropriate rank. The power wielding executives in the provinces were assigned by coups commanders of the area in the question.

The work of representative bodies was suspended, but they were not dissolved. The political parties continued to function albeit with some limitations. The country's constitution was not abolished, rather it was temporarily suspended. President Mohammad Rafique Tarar continued to execute his responsibilities. General Musharraf simply assumed the title of the chief executive.

All these and some other differences of Musharraf's military regime were to a large degree a consequence of the changing times. The attitude in the world to dictatorships of all kinds had become more intolerant and it was necessary to conceal unlaw full and authoritarian features of the military ruling regimes more meticulously. The reaction in the world to Musharraf's coming to power was critical and quite negative; it was in sharp contrast to the reaction in Pakistan where the Nawaz Shareef government was quite unpopular. International public opinion in general regarding General Pervez Musharraf as a 'power usurper', and for some time he was persona non grata in many capitals. It would be enough to say that Pakistan's membership in the British common wealth was suspended. And the sanctions imposed on Pakistan in connection with its nuclear weapons tests in May 1998 were made more rigid.

In order to remove the misperception about the military region. Parvez Musharraf did a lot to improve the performance of different sectors. It was important for him to prove that he was forced to take the power and was going to return to a civil from of government in the shortest possible time.

The military regime conducted all its state and political work in accordance with plan of action it had developed named 'Path to

Democracy'. It included such important stages as the re-organization of the local government bodies, holding of the elections for these bodies, and preparation for the future national elections schedule for October 2002.

In their Endeavour of reforming the administration and civil government system, the regime used formal democratic procedures and regulations. Only after the lapse of nearly two years since the coup, in June 2001, the military ruler decided to dissolve the federal and provincial legislature, presented as step necessary to prepare for holding of elections in Autumn of 2002.

In June 2001, Parvez Musharraf assumed the role of Pakistan's president. In October 2001, his about to expire term of the Chief of Army Staff was extended. As a payoff for the obtained slotsA, Musharraf left the post of the chairman of the Joint Chief Staff Committee (JCSC).

A decision on holding a national referendum was made to approve General Musharraf's tenure as a president.

According to official sources more than two-thirds of the country's electorate participated in the referendum and about 98% of those votes were polled in support of Musharraf.

In the period of preparation to the parliamentary elections the electoral system was changed. A positive aspect of these changes was the abolition in August 2002 of the electorate (curia) system, introduced or rather re-introduced under Zia-ul-Haq. And, simultaneously, special additional seats in the federal parliament and in the provincial legislative assemblies were given to women.

The number of members of the National Assembly increased up to 342. Of this number 272 deputies were to be elected by direct voting in single constituencies, 60 seats were reserved for women.

Women representation in the National Assembly further improved the image of the country at international level. Musharraf took several measures to uplift the most opposed class of society.

Women were empowered to participate in all sectors under the regime of Pervez Musharraf. As Zubeda Jalal Minister of Education, Firdous Ashique Awan was MNA in 2002 and Asma Jehangir was a member of Human Rights, Maliha Lodhi was Member of United Nations Secretary General Advisory Board from 2001 to 2005. Nilofer Bakhtiar appointed as Advisory Minister under the Cabinet of Shoukat

Aziz and Sumaria Malik was a Federal Minister. Minister of States as Ms Aneesa Zaib Jahirkheli, Ms Shahnawaz Shaikh.

### **Objective No.2**

To review socio-religious circumstances for the application of Musharraf's political reforms for the involvement of women in the political arena of Pakistan.

H-No2: Musharraf promoted women participation to avert the rising influence of Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan.

### **Analysis-2**

Fundamentalism defined as a group of individuals in the absolute authority of particular of interpretation of sacred religious scripture. Pakistan has faced the problem of fundamentalism after very few years of its birth. When the Ulema in Pakistan demanded Ahemdis be declared as non Muslim as early as in 1953. This trend was continued in presence of political vacuum and generated by in-efficient rulers. With the rise of power of Nawaz Sharif this trend was further reinforced when PML (N) government tried to seat 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the constitution pertaining to seat of Amir-ul-Momneen of the dint of 2/3 majority with Nawaz Sharif regime.

The religious section was vocal against women protection bill. A bill on the issue of honour killing was moved in the National Assembly. However, the focus was to legislate for uplifting women status. Mainstream religious party though agreed that domestic violence and ill treatment of women should be end but criticized main clauses of the bill as contrary to Holy Quran and Sunnah and they termed as conspiracy to make Pakistan a secular country. Similarly, there was strong criticism on any change in Hadood laws, which were seen as anti women by liberal section of population in Pakistan. Mukhtaran Mai case is evidence of male domination in the society of Pakistan. Women often denied justice and in a civilized society that is inexcusable. Violence against women's including rape is not uncommon in Pakistan. We have to take focus measure to rectify this sad malady. The emancipation of women mattered for Musharraf even before he took office. As an army officer he saw situation faced by women in many parts of the country. He (Musharraf) always felt wrong to him we have to do something about it.

Musharraf's first aim has been the political empowerment of women. Empowering them future politically gives them a way to shape their own. Though empowerment, they gain an opportunity to fight for women's causes themselves in the highest government bodies (Earlier he discussed what he has done to empower women politically at all level of government local provisional, and national). On the whole, he believes we have set in motion an irreversible process towards the emancipation of women. He says it is irreversible process because he saw gradually gaining momentum. Women themselves have risen to fight for their rights and many men now realize that they cannot and should not try to, stop the process.

International media highlighted Mukhtaran Bibi case particularly the additional on 29 Sept 2004 in New York times supported this event as more extra ordinary than tracking down Usama Bin Ladden. It included that we in the west could help by a simply speaking out against that oppression, but instead of standing beside fighter like Ms Mukhtaran. We are still sitting on the fence (29Sept 2004 New York). As a conscious Pervez Musharraf was praised by President Bush in joint press conference in December 2004. For prosecuting those who inflict harm and pain on Pakistan people.

### **Objective No.3**

To explore the impact of participation of women in political sphere on their performance in mainstream politics in Pakistan.

H-No3: Involvement in political sphere through reservation of women seats at both national and local levels has considerably provoked women in the mainstream politics.

### **Analysis-3**

The exact arrangements for quotas – whether these should be on a party or non-party basis, through direct or indirect election, the percentage and constituencies to be covered – were debated extensively throughout the 1990s. However, each elected government wanted to manipulate the arrangement such that the benefits would only accrue to the ruling party. Since each government had only a tiny edge over the opposition, none had enough support to ensure this, and quota arrangements remained unresolved.

Women's political representation whether at the national or the local level was ultimately secondary to political party interests.

However, in 2000, the Musharraf regime announced its ‘Devolution of Power’ programme through the promulgation of the Local Government Ordinance (LGO) 2000 at the federal level. For the first time in Pakistan’s history, the LGO of 2000 provided 33 per cent of the seats for women in all three tiers of LG across the four provinces. Previously, women’s quotas were left to provincial governments’ discretion, they varied widely between 2 and 25 per cent.

Now, these seats were directly elected at village level for Union Councils and indirectly elected at district and sub-district levels for District and Tehsil councils (Yazdani 2003). With this the entry of approximately 36,000 women into local government. For the second round of elections, the government reduced the number of seats at the council level but was forced to keep the women’s quota at 33 per cent amidst protests from women councilors and NGOs. The overall reduction in seats resulted in fewer women entering the political scene, but by 2005, more women had mobilized and were contesting the general seats.

Category of seat	LG election 2000–1	LG election 2005
Total No. of available seats	36,066	24,463
Nominations filed	61,411 (1.7/seat)	57,275 (2.3/seat)
Percentage	170%	234%
Rejection/withdrawal	13,566	9,853
Percentage	37%	40%
Contesting candidates	47,845 (1.3/seat)	47,422 (1.9/seat)
Percentage	133%	194%
Unopposed seats	9,007	4,089
Percentage	25%	16.80%
Vacant seats	4,077	742
Percentage	11.3%	3%

**Source:** GoP, Elections 2005 Report.

As can be seen from Table, even though seats were reduced for the 2005 election, a greater percentage of women filed nominations and contested it compared with 2001. At national level, the women elected on general seats increased from 13 in 2002 to 17 in 2008. Although women's presence in legislatures at the national, provincial and district levels has become more pronounced, reservations have elicited disdain and contempt among some government representatives. According to The Aurat Foundation Citizens' Report (n.d.: 3) one Minister for Local Government reportedly said: Bibi, you don't know the situation on the ground. We are political people and we know the reality. If you reserve 33 per cent seats for women, you will find that very few genuine women will come forward willingly to contest these seats. In fact, you will find mostly servant girls and harlots will be brought forward by men to occupy the reserved seats.

## CONCLUSION

Musharraf period proved that it was favourable for the women of Pakistan. However, the principle of female suffrage for women's reserved seats on the basis of special territorial consistencies as envisaged on the 1956 constitution the effect of this lapse can best be judge by analysis of the election held in 2002. At tough Gen Pervez Musharraf very boldly increased the numbers of reserved women's seat in unprecedented 20% in the assemblies and 33% in the local bodies, reportedly as many as 31% of the women in NWFP, Balochistan and Southern Punjab were not allowed by their men to vote. If the principle of women voiding for the reserved women's seats had been included in the LFO even MMA party leaders would have been encourage to ensure that their women folk went out and voted for MMA women candidates. The alter active would have been to surrender the 22% reserved women seats to their rival parties. This would also have had are advantage of making candidates for the reserved women's seats accountable to their women voters. Thus forcing the candidates the political agendas conductive to resolving women's women' problems and helping them to achieve their due rights women's demands would have been presented and fought for in the assemblies by women parliamentarians, who would have had to demonstrate their dedication and record on women as an essential requirement for seeking re-election (*Friday Time*, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2003).

This would have been on stark contrast to the position that has persisted ever since the abrogation of the 1956 constitution, where by women parliamentarians have been beholden to their party leaders .who have virtually nominated them for occupation the reserved women seats. Even today their political subjugation has not fully alimented it is worth pandering whether women parliamentarian would have allowed selves to be lack of decorum as was witnessed during may 2003 in Punjab assembly if they had been directly elected and did not have to their master's bidding. However, all said women owe ailed to Parvez Musharraf, besides the increase in reserved women seats in the assemblies 2 to 20% women now constituted 33% of the union tehsil and district council. Many women have been sent as ambassadors to various countries.

These are bold and positive steps that herald the beginning of a whole new chapter in the political participation of women in Pakistan. Now it is more important upon women parliamentarian to take meaning full steps for gaining a deeper understanding of women's issues and problems as knowledge and awareness increases. It is hoped that women parliamentarian will rise above party band for jointly devising appropriate measures in supports of women's rights. It would be more effective way of enhancing the political empowerment of women as envisaged conference on women's political participation in Jan 2003 where he had stated that the women members of the assemblies must rise beyond party affiliation influence decision making to ensure that no low detrimental to their rights and interests in passed. It is heartening to note that subsequent development in the Punjab assemblies where women members of the opposition broke rank with their male colleagues benches in supporting in provision of Punjab prevention of domestic violence bill 2003. Similarity the subsequent passage of the honor killing act and women protection act has helped bring to surface a new breed of women politician. Such as Sherry Rehman from PPP, Nilofar Bhaktiar from PML(Q), Kashmala Tariq from PML(Q) and Fouzia Wahab from PPP their roles in passage of these acts have definitely proved that there at the end of tunnel.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To reinforce the foundation for enhanced political participation options for women and other under-represented communities, the following measures are to be taken:

- Local Government system in all provinces, providing for 33% reserved seats for women, besides provisions for adequate gender balanced representation of minorities, peasants, workers and women from FATA and Balochistan need to be restored.
- Preserve the Existing quotas for women's reserved seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies and the Senate, and further increase in their proportion from 17% to 33%, ensuring that the reservation includes all categories, e.g., minorities, peasants, workers, technocrats, women of tribal areas, etc.
- Women's reserved seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies and Local Government through the constituency-based direct election modality should be increased.
- Distribute roles and authorities of different tiers of government - development functions being reserved for the local government and policy and legislative functions for provincial and federal governments.
- Elected women should be empowered with training on parliamentary/local government rules and procedures and communication/media interface skills.
- All elected representatives on women's concerns and those of other underserved segments of the population.
- To strengthen women's position within political parties, the following measures are to be taken.

The Political Parties Order, 2002, making it mandatory for all Political Parties to:

- Hold regular intra-Party elections for all positions;
- 33% representation of women in the Parties should ensured and all decision-making bodies, e.g. central and provincial executive committees, parliamentary boards, budget and manifesto committees;
- Progressively increased number of directly elected women within the Party's ranks must be encouraged;
- At least 15% tickets to women on winnable general seats in elections for Provincial and National Assemblies; may be awarded.
- For the electoral processes, the following measures are to be taken:
- Associate women field-based workers, District and Union Council administrations, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working at the grassroots, with efforts to inform and motivate hard to reach communities to register women (including those who have recently

attained the electoral eligibility age) and guide women about voting procedures and venues.

- Develop systems to facilitate all women candidates contesting general seats, including but not restricted to, the creation of a financial pool to support women candidates and reduction of election sureties.
- Design a Code of Conduct barring Political Party from character assassination of women candidates; and establish and enforce strict punitive measures for related offences.
- Establish rules and mechanisms to women from exercising their right of franchise or contesting elections.
- Enact and empower the ECP to immediately declare elections null and void in constituencies where a predetermined percentage and number of women have been prevented from freely exercising their right of franchise or contesting elections, or there is large-scale non-participation of women in voting.
- Fill the women's reserved seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies and Local Government through the constituency-based direct election modality.
- Demarcate roles and authorities of different tiers of government - development functions being reserved for the local government and policy and legislative functions for provincial and federal governments.
- Empower elected women with training on parliamentary/local government rules and procedures and communication/media interface skills.
- Orient all elected representatives on women's concerns and those of other underserved segments of the population.

To strengthen women's position within political parties, the following measures are to be taken:

Revise and amend the Political Parties Order, 2002, making it mandatory for all Political Parties to:

- hold regular intra-Party elections for all positions;
- Ensure 33% representation of women in the Party membership and all decision-making bodies, e.g. central and provincial executive committees, parliamentary boards, budget and manifesto committees;
- Adopt a progressively increased number of directly elected women within the Party's ranks;

- Award at least 15% tickets to women on winnable general seats in elections for Provincial and National Assemblies; strengthen and empower women's wings and establish women's wings where they do not exist.
- To engender the electoral processes, the following measures are to be taken:
- Associate women field-based workers, District and Union Council administrations, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working at the grassroots, with efforts to inform and motivate hard to reach communities to register women (including those who have recently attained the electoral eligibility age) and guide women about voting procedures and venues.
- Develop systems to facilitate all women candidates contesting general seats, including but not restricted to, the creation of a financial pool to support women candidates and reduction of election sureties.
- Design a Code of Conduct barring Political Party from character assassination of women candidates; and establish and enforce strict punitive measures for related offences.
- Establish rules and mechanisms to restrain or disallow women from exercising their right of franchise or contesting elections.
- Enact and empower the ECP to immediately declare elections null and void in constituencies where a predetermined percentage and number of women have been prevented from freely exercising their right of franchise or contesting elections, or there is large-scale non-participation of women in voting.

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